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ABSTRACT

The importance of building positive attitudes and habits in developing successful reading experiences is discussed. In order to have positive attitudes toward himself and toward his reading, the child must acquire basic concepts about language and its relation to himself. Among these concepts are (1) I can talk about what I think about, (2) what I can talk about I can communicate in some other way, (3) anything I can record I can recall through speaking or reading, (4) I can read what I write and what other people write for me to read, and (5) each letter of the alphabet stands for one or more sounds that I make when I talk. Concepts for the teacher to use in guiding the child to achieve the above concepts are also listed. Reports of the way four teachers employ these principles of language experience in classroom instruction are presented, including activities and materials used. Indicators of progress in providing a setting for language expression that makes the attitudes and habits of each child central to the teaching act are listed as criteria for program evaluation. (CM)

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Attitudes and the Art of Teaching Reading

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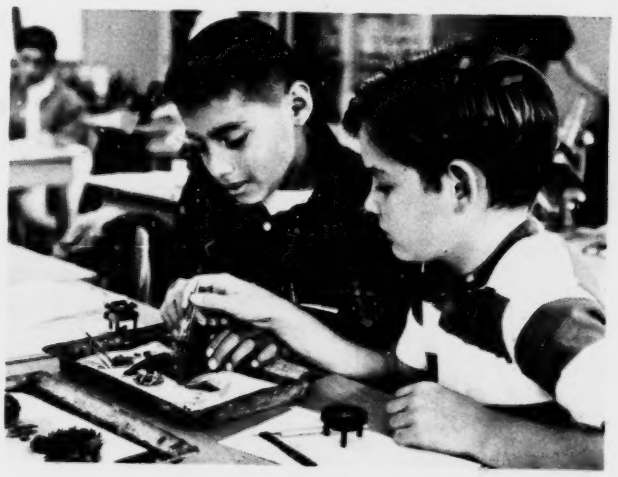
With increased levels of sensitivity, each child can –

hear more
feel more
extend meanings
discover new meanings in his surroundings



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Attitudes and the Art of Teaching Reading

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Table of Contents

ATTITUDES AND THE ART OF TEACHING 5

Concepts for the Child To Hold 6
Concepts for the Teacher To Hold 9
Summary 12

CLASSROOM PROFILES 13

The Habit of "Making Reading" 15
Attitudes of Personal Success 23
Meaningful Learning Situations 33
Self-Understanding 39

A LOOK AHEAD 45

Attitudes and the Art of Teaching

Children learn best what they want to learn. If they want to read they *can* and *will*—provided they do not meet with so much failure and discouragement that they give up before they can gain enough confidence and skill to make the reading habit a pleasure. Some will take more time than others. Some will read better and read more than others. But all of them can and will read something—and most of them can read printed materials.

The teacher's task, then, becomes one of working on the "wanters" of the children—to create in each one the desire to know what reading is and how to read. The essence of the teaching act that considers the feelings and attitudes of learners to be as important as the development of skills is the art of raising the levels of sensitivity of each child to his environment, so that he can, basically, see more, hear more, and feel more. As his perception is developed, the child becomes able to distinguish more precisely—observe the unusual in the usual, see something extraordinary in the ordinary—and thereby discover new meanings in his surroundings.

With this increasingly accurate conception of reality, the child then develops his capacity to imagine, to generalize, and to extend

meanings. Increased sensitivity to his real and imaginary world helps the child learn to communicate his thoughts through construction, making models, painting, writing, reading aloud, reporting, dramatization, dramatic play, singing, or playing games.

With increased sensitivity to his world and with multiple ways of expressing his own ideas, the child can experience and have a share in the ideas of other people. He learns to communicate with increased clarity, uses language appropriate to his listening or reading audience, and gains a unique sensitivity that is his alone. Thus the child passes eagerly from one step to another in improving his ability to understand and be understood by others.

Most children do not benefit from an attempt to get them to read something before they have developed an interest in it. Some degree of meaning must be present before a child can relate new meanings to previous understandings. It is just as essential to help the child develop an understanding of the *process* of reading by providing a multitude of experiences of seeing reading matter being made in the classroom from his talk as to use procedures that emphasize the meanings of the content of what is being read. One without the other may result in inefficient habits of reading and in negative attitudes toward reading.

At the same time, it is important to remember that each child has a natural language and that new language learnings must be related to it, faulty as it may be. Because of the wide range of natural language abilities that children possess at all age levels, it is impossible to propose standard programs for building habits of reading and attitudes toward reading. Rather, it is the work of teachers to be familiar with the wide range of abilities to be developed and to have a wealth of resources through which children can develop positive attitudes toward and habits of reading. No matter what reading abilities are selected for emphasis or what experiences are introduced in the learning environment, they should fulfill the purpose of helping each child deepen the feeling that he *can read successfully*.

Concepts for the Child To Hold

If the reading habit is to mature, and positive attitudes toward reading are to support reading practices throughout a person's life, the teacher of children in elementary grades must assume some responsibility to help each child to conceptualize, habituate, and internalize a few truths about himself and language. From repeated experiences each child acquires basic knowledge about language and its relation to himself.

I can talk about what I think about.

In a program devoted to the improving of oral and written communication, the thoughts of each child become the basic ingredient. It is expected that the thoughts and the language of other people as recorded in stories and books will influence the learner, but this is not fundamental to the beginnings of new learnings. Language meanings come from inside, not outside, the learner. They are modified, extended, and elaborated through sources outside the learner. Printed materials are only *some* of the sources. Firsthand experiences provide rich food for thought and conversation.

What I can talk about I can communicate in some other way.

Forms of expression of ideas vary a great deal, but in most school situations they are painting, drawing, modeling, construction, talking, and writing. Some teachers use such media as dramatic play, rhythms, and dramatizations, but these generally are interpretations of another person's ideas rather than expressions of one's own ideas.

Although painting, speech, and writing will continue probably as the most popular and the most personal forms of recording and sharing ideas, all forms of self-expression should be utilized. Thus children become skillful in a variety of modes of communication. The extent to which there is a choice of means of self-expression will be a measure of the number of children who experience success.

Anything I record I can recall through speaking or reading.

Experiences with both picture writing and writing with letters of our alphabet help the child to recognize that the latter is much more precise than the former and gives the reader more specific clues about the thinking of the author. Good writing, with a wide vocabulary and skillful use of figurative language, conveys meanings that are almost identical with those of the author.

The abilities required for effective written communication do not emerge from lessons. They emerge as each child moves back and forth between writing and the less specific media of communication, the whole development hinged on oral communication that stems from the desire of a thinking individual to share his ideas.

I can read what I write and what other people write for me to read.

The child who from the beginning relates speaking, listening, and writing to the reading

process is the child who can read and profits from the act. He learns to carry on a conversation with an author—

- Listening to what he has to say
- Agreeing and disagreeing
- Accepting and rejecting his ideas
- Enjoying or despising
- Integrating his own ideas with those of the author.

Thus, for him, reading is not a separate study in school but is a natural part of activities dealing with learning and the sending and receiving of messages.

As I talk and write I use some words over and over, and some words not so often.

Most children enter school with a large speaking vocabulary. They use the words of highest frequency in our language with ease and with a variety of meanings. The control, as regards words of high frequency, is built into the language and is a natural part of the individual's developing language pattern. The instructional task is one of helping each child to—

- Recognize the visual forms of the words he is using.
- Realize that all the children in his class use many of the same words.
- Understand that even the people who write stories for him to read use these high frequency words.

As I write to represent the sounds I make through speech, I use the same symbols (letters) over and over.

When the phonetic elements of his own language are taught through experience, the child learns to symbolize his speech sounds. This is in contrast to the method in which the teacher selects the sound or sounds to be learned.

Phonetic understandings are developed through a sequence from saying to seeing. This ensures that the understandings are applied to the *real language experiences* of each individual, including skills in listening, speaking, word recognition, and spelling. Children are as capable of making valid generalizations about the English language as of analyzing words. Such developing understandings make the learner increasingly independent in the language skills of reading and writing.

Each letter of the alphabet stands for one or more sounds that I make when I talk.

To develop this understanding that letters stand for familiar sounds, the teacher first records the oral language of the individual. As the child becomes increasingly skillful in writing, this understanding of the relationship be-

tween the letter and the sound matures to the point of including the many variations inherent in the English language. The variable phonetic system of English requires that the child learn the elements of phonics with procedures that emphasize the *oral* prior to the *written* aspects of the language.

As the child begins to recognize that every word begins with a sound that he can write down, he experiences a breakthrough to the magic realm of reading and writing. His learnings continue as he develops an awareness of such language characteristics as common word endings, syllables, consonant blends, digraphs, diphthongs, and other aspects of word structure. These understandings become a long-range learning experience that continues throughout life. They are not finished at any given grade level or with the completion of a certain course of study.

Most of the words I speak and write, other people use when they speak and when they write the things that I read.

Children who conceptualize the idea that speaking and writing and reading are all facets of one thing—our language—are released from the fear that they cannot read a story. They realize that most of the words found in the printed story are the same ones they use in their own speech and writing. If the story deals with an idea that has some meaning to the reader, word meanings will be enriched and clarified and vocabularies will be enlarged through reading. Children who use abundant writing as a means of gaining specific understandings about the nature of their language learn to deal with the ideas of authors when reading. This is in contrast to reading situations in which the author's ideas are lost in the confusion of trying to analyze words and relate speech sounds to printed symbols.

Concepts for the Teacher To Hold

It is not enough for the teacher to begin by helping each child to conceptualize a few simple truths about the relationships of reading to all forms of communication. There is a fundamental responsibility for every teacher to establish a conceptual framework which will guide him in the selection and use of activities, experiences, and materials and in the evaluation process. Such a frame of reference will guide teachers in establishing goals for individuals without endangering the unity of the instructional program. Concern about standardization and uniformity becomes a diminishing problem to the teacher who has adopted a conceptual frame-

work that reflects basic truths about the acquisition of language.

The basis of children's oral and written expression is their sensitivity to the environment of the classroom and the world at large.

The continuing responsibility of the teacher is to help children at all levels of ability to be increasingly sensitive to the world in which they live—to talk about it, to write about it, to represent their thinking about it in many media. Out of this practice comes facility in using language to express thoughts and relating ideas of authors to their own questions and experiences.

Freedom in self-expression—oral and written—leads to self-confidence in all language usage, including grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and word recognition.

Understanding the nature and flexibility of the English language to a degree that one can look at printed symbols and reconstruct the language of another person is a lifelong process. These understandings do not result from exercises in reworking other people's language. Rather, they mature as a child works with and reworks his own language. As he writes to say something of importance or of interest to himself, he deals with language letter-by-letter, word-by-word, and sentence-by-sentence. It is when he seeks to improve his own language—that which he has constructed—that he makes significant gains in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of that language. Repeated success in this process of writing, reading, and refining his written language gives the child confidence to view reading materials as another person's language. He can approach the reading act with the attitude of being able to reconstruct the author's language as he does his own written expression.

There is a natural flow of language development in children who are engaged in a program of instruction that values self-expression.

A program of instruction that builds on the individual child's modes of expression results in a natural flow of language at a continuously higher level. Through a series of sequential steps the development may be fostered.

The child's oral expression is stimulated and strengthened by offering opportunities for art expression, careful observation, and viewing of films and filmstrips (especially those without words).

From oral expression children's written expression flows easily. First experiences may be in the form of dictation to the teacher or to a child who can write. At the primary level, older children may be used for this function, and they in turn get practice in writing from dictation.

Motivation for improving language form and usage comes as children's writing is used for others to read.

As children continue to write, their forms of expression are influenced by the things they read. Good reading material leads to good language usage.

As a child expresses his own ideas, he is interested in finding out, through the habit of reading, what other people think and say about topics of interest to him.

Communication of children is promoted by numerous activities, experiences, and devices; the use of a variety of materials and activities increases the chances of success for more children and results in positive attitudes.

Making of class books, listening to stories, storytelling, sharing, dictating to each other, and similar activities help children build confidence in expanding ideas and refining language skills. Language is the cement that holds the total curriculum together. The classroom is used as a laboratory for experimenting with and exploring language throughout the day. Good language experiences add depth of meaning in the social studies, raise thoughtful questions in science, individualize interpretations in art and music, promote accuracy in mathematics, and provide freedom of expression in creative writing. The habit of using reading to find answers to questions, to find new organization for ideas, to extend meanings, and to provide recreation is developed in a laboratory situation—not in a series of lessons.

Utilization of the child's own language as one of the bases for reading instruction results in a high degree of independence in reading and writing.

At all levels of the elementary school, children should have frequent opportunities to read their own writing to the total class, to small groups within the class, and to other groups within the school.

When a child is reading his own writing, the concept (or meaning) load of the reading material is reduced to zero. In preparation for oral reading, he can devote his energies to clarity of expression, effectiveness of presentation, interpretation of punctuation, and other details necessary in good reading. During the process, he begins to recognize the words that he is using in the writings of others and in books. Sensitivity to well-written materials of others develops with a true appreciation for our best authors.

Learning situations must be designed so that each child, as a person, can view himself as

worthy and able to succeed in reading tasks of increasing difficulty.

How a child feels about himself and his relations with others—his family, his teacher, and other members of his class—will determine to a great extent what he is able to say, write, and read. School practices that treat reading achievement as the measure of success may be destroying self-image at a rate that exceeds reading skill development. Practices of ability grouping for daily reading instruction can only highlight unworthiness and negate any positive attitudes that may be built in other language experiences. Since every child individualizes his reading whether the teacher wants him to or not, the sensible attitude toward building good learning situations is one that maximizes success for each individual and provides for flexible, purposeful groups that utilize situations in which—

- The child is a member of the total class.
- The child is a member of many different types of small groups.
- The child is working individually with the teacher.
- The child is alone with his thoughts.

Summary

Positive attitudes toward reading and abiding habits of reading do not grow as a result of direct lessons in skills of reading. These skills are essential, but equally essential are the basic concepts about language that mature with each child, the conceptual framework within which the teacher works, and the learning environment of the school and home. A tragedy as great as not being able to read efficiently is being able to read efficiently but not wanting to read.

Positive attitudes and habits of reading are supported and reinforced through the mastery of reading skills, but mastery of skills does not assure positive attitudes and habits. Each person, alone, must develop inner resources with which he can make choices about himself and reading. Choices may become habituated to the point that they are automatic, but they have been made—for either a lifelong experience with reading or a lifelong struggle against reading. Either habit can be and has been developed and promoted in school situations. In order that we might always work toward the development of positive attitudes and habits, each parent and teacher would do well to heed the advice of Kahlil Gibran as he wrote in *The Prophet:*

> *The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom, but rather of his faith and his lovingness.*
>
> *If he is indeed wise, he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of his own mind.*

Classroom Profiles

Some teachers have been unusually successful in guiding students to the world of reading so that it is a natural, normal part of living. These teachers cannot be observed widely, and they are not available to give oral reports of their teaching experiences, but it is possible to record some of their practices. These reports—classroom profiles—might influence all of us to regard the attitudes that a child holds about himself (his self-concept) as a key to reading success as well as the key to successful living.

These classroom profiles are presented as examples of what many teachers have done; they are not all-inclusive or highly organized. Each reader is invited to add other examples from teaching experience. It is hoped that this brief selection will help all of us to think of teaching as the art of raising the levels of sensitivity of each child and that it will help us to view reading instruction as only one part of the process of educating human beings.

Habits of Reading the Immediate Environment Begin as Children . . .

speak and listen to each other

talk and dictate to give meaning to art activities

listen, view, discuss, and report to convey meaning in science experiments.

The Habit of "Making Reading"

The kindergarten class of Molly Baker is a language-centered class. Miss Baker believes that the greatest contribution to reading attitude and habit that can be made through the instructional program is that of helping each child to recognize that he has a language that is useful to himself and others. Effective listening and speaking are immediate goals of the communications program; building backgrounds and beginnings of reading and writing are goals of equal importance. Miss Baker believes the communications activities hold the school program together:

- Talking and dictating give depth of meaning to art and construction activities.
- Listening, viewing, discussing, making books, and reporting are vehicles for conveying the meanings of social studies emphases, science experiences, and the quantitative aspects of living.
- Planning together, learning new words and new meanings of old words, talking, and careful listening add spirit to the singing of songs and playing of games.
- Focusing on a program of maturing the personal language of each child places the creative thinking process at the heart of the instructional program.

To achieve her goals, Miss Baker uses a simple guide:

- Enough structure without limiting the program
- Enough variety to assure success for every child every day
- Enough direct teaching of language skills to assure maturation on the part of children without uniform expectancies or standardized measures.

A rationale, or guide for planning, which proves to be helpful but not rigid, includes a variety of language activities as a part of the continuing program.

Each day there is opportunity for some children to engage in oral sharing on topics and

interests that are purely personal. What is shared may or may not be related to current studies in social studies and science. Miss Baker feels that each time a child assumes responsibility for sharing his own ideas, he may be revealing new interests and is extending his feeling of responsibility as a group member.

Miss Baker selects some piece of good literature and reads aloud to the class every day. She suggests that children listen for a variety of purposes other than simple comprehension. She expects some type of feedback from the listening experience. The children are encouraged to recall their own related everyday experiences. Their hopes and desires are stimulated by the stories selected. Their imaginations are heightened as they project themselves into fuller ranges of thought under the guidance of a good author.

Every day Miss Baker takes dictation from at least one child—usually more than one. Many of the stories dictated are related to paintings done at the easel. Children are encouraged to tell their whole story orally to the class and then are asked to select one or two things to dictate to the teacher to write.

As Miss Baker writes, she engages in conversation with the children about such things as the names of letters, sounds represented by the letters of the alphabet, letter formation, and other items of interest to the children.

The range of vocabulary of one dictation activity is illustrated by a group that became interested in the ocean. Miss Baker led discussions, showed films, and read stories about the ocean. Then each child produced a crayon drawing and told about it to the total class, selecting one thing for the teacher to write on the picture. Here is what the children selected:

"There are lots of fish in the water." Holly
"The fish are hungry." Frank
"The waves toss the boat." Mike
"We are under the ocean." Crystal
"We walk on the beach." Jan
"These are boats on the water." Janna
"We saw the fish in the movie." Judy
"The shark is after the porcupine fish." Yolanda
"The boat and octopus and shark are by the tower." Anthony
"The man is catching fish near a submarine." John
"This is a tower in our bay." Tyronne
"The men are fishing from our tower." Anthony A.
"The blowfish are scared." George P.
"This is a lollipop boat." Patty
"The anemones are catching worms." Vickie
"The scuba diver is coming down to the bathyscaphe." Robert
"The brown fish hasn't any friends. He just moved into the water." Debra
"Starfish are under the water." Mary Ann
"The boat is sunk under the water." Edralen

"The Bathyscaphe Trieste is going down to take pictures." Ronney
"The big octopus is swimming with her baby." George
"See the boat, the submarine, and the bathyscaphe." Jeff
"The crabs are hiding in the shells." Florence
"I see flying fish and a bird eating a fish." Deborah
"Everybody is afraid of the sharks." Sharon
"The wind is blowing the whale up." Patty
"These things live in the ocean." Norma
"The fishing boat is over the fish." Jason
"The anemone is going to catch a fish." Caterina
"Here is an octopus." Keith
"There is the sun for the animals in the ocean." Lenore

Daily story-telling time differs from sharing time, since it includes instruction: how to begin a story, how to develop a plot, and how to come to an ending. Children are encouraged to tell stories that involve people and animals.

Initially Miss Baker tells stories that will serve as examples. She reads stories that are good ones for children to retell. As she works with children on storytelling, she gives them real experiences—

- In expressing ideas in thought units.
- In using colorful and descriptive language.
- In developing ideas in sequence.
- In choosing good action words.

All of these experiences are essential for success in reading print with meaning. Miss Baker is convinced that a child who cannot tell a story is a very poor risk for success in reading a story.

Attention to an ever-expanding oral vocabulary is another daily experience in the communications program. This emphasis is related to other language experiences in most cases. It is not a separate study of words. It is related to the real experiences of social studies and science—to observing, feeling, tasting, hearing, imagining.

Miss Baker uses the oral reading time to point out interesting words authors use to describe things they are writing about. She points out the variety of ways authors begin sentences, their use of more than one descriptive word at a time, their use of action words, and other aspects of good language that might be used by children in their oral speech.

She hopes through the emphasis on an ever-expanding vocabulary to prepare children for more effective writing and reading experiences. This emphasis, combined with storytelling and dictating, helps children to conceptualize that any word they can use in oral language can be dictated for one of their stories—and then can be read by the teacher and others who know how to read. Miss Baker feels very deeply that children should be surrounded in the classroom with opportunities to hear rich vocabulary and ex-

perience the use of their full language power before they come under the influence of highly controlled vocabularies in basic readers.

Boys and girls engage in discussions every day. They respond and react to each other, to the rich environment of the classroom, and to topics of current interest. Miss Baker is alert to identify topics which seem to have interest to many children and devotes some time every week to the development of more and more mature discussion skills.

In the discussion situation Miss Baker is not asking questions and seeking responses. Rather, she is developing a talking-listening situation in which there is interaction among pupils and between pupils and teacher. She helps the children to see that as contributions are made, they may have to alter their ideas, since new information is brought by others. This requires each participant to be a careful listener at all times. This is a more mature skill than that of answering questions.

Miss Baker recognizes the value of developing oral discussion skills for future reading and writing. As children gain confidence and ability to develop a theme or topic orally, she helps them to conceptualize that—

- Writing is a record of oral language. If they can talk about (discuss) something, they can write about it. She illustrates this by taking dictation or by summarizing a discussion on the chalkboard or on a chart.
- Reading is often a discussion experience with a person who is not present. We listen to what he has to say. In between the lines we agree or disagree, change our minds, extend our information, enjoy, and add our own experiences to those of the author. As she reads to children, Miss Baker seeks responses from children that help them feel that they are having a discussion with the author.

A well-planned discussion gives opportunity for frequent repetition of key words that express the ideas of the theme. Children who use words that are new to them during a discussion activity are prepared to use the words in their personal language. At the same time they are expanding their oral vocabularies, children are using the highest frequency words. In the planned discussion the teacher is in a good position to help children clear up some of the gross errors in speech patterns—especially in the use of common words. At a planned discussion time, Miss Baker feels that her role is different, as far as "correcting" is concerned, from the role she plays when children are engaged in oral sharing on a purely personal basis.

Miss Baker does not have a routine plan or any semblance of a schedule when she directly teaches the relationships between speech, writing, and reading. Rather, she tries to keep in mind some guides for instruction that are appropriate for the children being taught and teaches as opportunities arise.

She has a strong conviction that if specific word recognition skills are developed in the kindergarten, they must emerge as a natural language experience. Such technical aspects must be secondary to the role of helping to support the major concepts and generalizations in language usage. These must be observed and discussed as individuals are having personal language experiences that require their application.

Some of the word recognition skills that are expected to emerge each year for some children (but not for all) are—

- Recognition that some words are alike, some words begin alike, and some words have the same endings
- Ability to use the names of letters of the alphabet in talking about words
- Ability to recognize one's name in print
- Ability to write one's name on paintings and other personal productions
- Recognition of some of the words in the environment—popular brands used in advertising, signs on the way to school, names of stores in shopping centers, labels in the classroom, and simple picture captions that are obvious.

Miss Baker wants each child, before leaving kindergarten, to perceive himself as a reader and a writer as well as a speaker and a listener. She makes charts of words cut from magazines and newspapers—words that many children are sure to recognize—and has a reading time in which she lets those who can identify words and read them to the class. She feels that it is of extreme importance that children feel that learning to read print is a natural part of living and that all the children can read some print when they leave kindergarten. In developing this concept, she avoids any emphasis on recognition of words of high frequency, which receive major emphasis in the beginning of most first-grade programs.

Occasionally Miss Baker has in her class a child who can read simple stories. She lets such children read to the class after they have prepared a story for oral reading. She also finds that some children learn to read stories they have dictated. These children are asked to read from time to time; but she has no plan or program to get all children to this level of understanding relationships between speaking, writing, and reading.

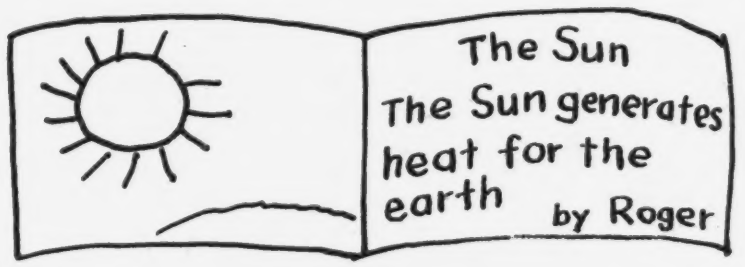
A continuing activity throughout the school year is that of making books—collecting the

stories of many children or of an individual child into books that can be used in the classroom. Some books are in the process of being made all the time. Upon completion, they are included in the classroom library, exchanged for those in other classrooms, or displayed prominently in the classroom. Miss Baker believes that her treatment of the children's books is an important element in developing an environment in which an individual will contribute to a class book or will author an individual book.

In addition to the stories that may grow out of easel paintings, many children become involved in painting and dictating on a common general topic or about a shared experience. For this type of activity, paper which is not too large to be bound into books is provided. Children may use crayons or tempera paint to illustrate their ideas. When the pictures are completed the teacher calls eight to ten children into a group to dictate their stories to her. She arranges them around her table so all the children can observe her as she records the speech of each storyteller.

The children may be asked to fold up a portion of the paper where they will not paint to allow space for recording their story. Or the book may be made up with illustrations on one page and stories on the opposite page.

After the stories and pictures are complete, they are bound into books, which the teacher shows and reads to the total class. Sometimes Miss Baker invites first- and second-grade classes to her room for a story time when she will read books which have been authored by kindergarten children. Her group usually gets invitations to visit other classrooms for story time when children in those classes have written books.



Miss Baker hopes that each year every child will experience individual authorship. Work toward this goal starts early in the school year. Several blank books made by stapling four sheets

of newsprint into a construction-paper cover are available for children who have a story to tell. The child makes crayon drawings, one or two or more in sequence, to tell his story and then dictates the story to the teacher. Because of the rich language environment, the painting and dictating, and the experience of contributing to class books, most children are able to develop a book of three or four pages. These are short, simple books, but they prepare the child for authorship of other books.

As the year ends, most children illustrate and dictate to the teacher at least one book that is typed and bound with a sturdy cover. Mothers of children in the class always help Miss Baker with the typing and binding. They become excited, just like the children, when they come in contact with the personal language, creative ideas, and interpretative illustrations of young children.

When the child takes home a book that he has created, Miss Baker sends the parents a note explaining that the child may be able to read some of his own book, but that is not necessarily an indication that he can read the same words at other places; he has established a relationship between his own speech and how it looks in print. The reading of the print is incidental at this point, but it is reading! A foundation has been laid that will help the child always to remember that "reading is talk written down." He will never fear reading as being something he cannot do. The positive attitude that is essential for success and the habit of choosing reading as a worthwhile and pleasurable experience will have begun on a firm foundation.

Attitudes of Personal Success Grow as Each Child Expresses His Own Thoughts . . .

through dramatic play

through painting

through telling stories

through writing.

Attitudes of Personal Success

Mrs. Janet Scott is a first-grade teacher in Buena Park School, located in an area where many of the children have limited language backgrounds and some have very poor oral language. Many are reluctant to reveal the little language power that they possess and might be considered by some to be retarded. But Mrs. Scott views each one as having the potential for some type of success in language each day and strives to achieve this goal. She knows that no one set of prepared materials can meet the needs of all the children in improving language expression. Consequently, she neither looks for such materials nor engages in so-called research projects that seek to prove that one set of materials is superior to others. Rather, she tries to choose a wide range of language experiences that will meet a variety of needs without making any child feel that he belongs to an unworthy group. She avoids teaching procedures that designate some children as low achievers even before they have had a chance to find out what they can do. Her past experience tells her that children who are so designated early in their school life view themselves as incapable and perform accordingly day after day. She prefers to spend her time and energy in building attitudes of personal success with the hope that most of the children, if not all of them, will rise above the poor perceptions they hold of themselves.

According to Mrs. Scott, each child has a language personality that is unique. She is determined to preserve some of that individuality as she builds understandings and skills that will aid in communication through speech and writing. So that she can do this, the procedure from the first day in her class requires the individual to express his own thoughts, aspirations, ideas, and ideals. The teacher works with the children to help them move from oral and pictorial expression of their ideas to expression through writing. The language experiences involved are not separated from the act of reading; Mrs. Scott finds it impossible to remove the basic instruction in reading from the real, personal language of chil-

dren who are finding their own words, sentences, and stories in the classroom environment. To accommodate the wide range of language development, Mrs. Scott has varied language activities that meet the following criteria of good experiences for children:

- Require each student to apply his own language
- Invite the child to engage in thinking on a personal basis
- Draw upon past experiences and the imagination of each child
- Require a minimum of preparation on the part of the teacher
- Place the teacher in the role of a resource person rather than the keeper of the keys to knowledge
- Are inexpensive, and the products need not be saved from year to year
- Assure success at some level for every child.

Some of the language activities are described here.

In Mrs. Scott's classroom, talk is a basic ingredient for developing other communication skills—listening, writing, and reading. She finds that most children have an abundance of talk that can be used in making reading. Her procedure is very similar to "making books," reported in the first profile.

As each sentence of a child's talk is recorded, Mrs. Scott chats informally with the children about what she is doing, identifying new words, inviting the children to say the names of letters, and talking about words that begin alike, words that end alike, and words that are identical. She proves that anything the children can say can be written down with the 26 letters of our alphabet and that a person who knows how to read can tell what someone has said without hearing him.

The children's talk is utilized in helping them understand more about their language. Skills of writing, spelling, and word recognition are being initiated. The integrity of each child is being preserved.

There is no set time when children in Mrs. Scott's class are expected to move from dictation of stories to independent writing. She listens for the first suggestion from a child that he can do his own writing. She knows from past experience that as soon as one child makes a commitment to do his own writing, others follow. When the load of taking dictation of stories is very heavy, Mrs. Scott asks girls and boys from other grades to help her.

Children paint at the easel to illustrate an idea or a story they have in mind. Sentences are written directly on the painting or on a story strip that is later attached to the painting.

About two children per day write stories on the chalkboard where their paintings are mounted. These stories are used for class discussion of the characteristics of good writing, are corrected, and then are copied by the author and attached to the painting. Often other children copy the stories from the chalkboard.

Two or three times each week the teacher or a child with such ability takes dictation in front of the whole class. This is usually, but not always, done in relation to a painting. It is different from the group-experience chart that is used for reading development. Mrs. Scott's purpose is to talk with the children about the structure of the written English language. The talk is informal and points up understandings that are essential for progress in doing independent writing. She calls attention to such things as—

- Letter formation
- Sounds represented by the letters
- Capitalization
- Punctuation
- Sentence sense
- Organization of ideas
- Use of descriptive words (modification).

Mrs. Scott usually emphasizes one or two things at one dictation period. She gets her clues for needed discussions and illustrations from observing and listening to children as they work. She can help children to gain understandings without doing excessive marking on children's own writing. The dictation activity also gives her a chance to continuously review essential skills.

As soon as a few children present Mrs. Scott with stories that they have written at home, she provides material for writing at home. Ten or twelve blank sheets of newsprint are stapled together for this purpose.

A folder for each child's stories is kept in a file box. Each day, as children bring their stories from home, they read them to the class and then file them. The folders are arranged alphabetically, providing a good experience in alphabetical arrangement.

When the number of stories is too great to allow each child to read, the procedure changes: a child files his stories until he has a certain number (usually 10) and then he is asked to choose one or two to read to the class. The stories are stapled into a book with a construction-paper cover and placed in the library. In this way Mrs. Scott supplements the book table with dozens of simple books that have real interest for children because the authors are in the classroom. She finds that parents also become interested in the development of writing and spelling skills and gain some understandings of the many-

faceted learnings in which the children are engaged.

Kathy wrote something almost every day after three months of school; samples of her diary-type writing follow.

My Day

I watched T.V. I played with Peggy. I played with Chipper. I like my family. I want a kitten.

My Own Day

I played monopoly with Peggy. I won the game. I like to play monopoly. The game of monopoly is the family's game. I play with my family.

Kathy's Days

Monday I played with Marleen.
Tuesday I played with Peggy.
Wednesday I played with Candy.
Thursday I played with Debbie.
Friday I played in the playhouse.
Saturday I played all day.
Sunday I went to Sunday School.

God

I love God. God loves me. God loves all. We all love God. We go to God's house. This is the end of God's story.

The spelling, capitalization, and punctuation in Kathy's stories were usually correct. This indicated participation on the part of some adult in her family. Upon inquiry, Mrs. Scott found that Kathy's mother looked forward to her writing activity at home and took time to help her. Her only complaint was that frequently Kathy awoke in the middle of the night wanting to get up and write a story.

Debbie also was a child who wrote at home almost every day. Her manuscript writing was remarkable at the end of the year; she had had abundant practice. Her spelling was so good that she could write stories on the chalkboard without reference to any spelling aids. The children were delighted with what she wrote at home and at school. Examples of her home writing follow.

My Daddy

My Daddy has been in the Navy for 13 years. He has been in the Philippines. My Daddy is nice. I love my Daddy. The end of the story about my Daddy.

When I Got Home from School

When I got home from school I practiced piano. Then I played cowboys. Joann was Billy and I was Annie Oakley. Joann is my brother when we play. Then I came in and watched T.V. Then I got ready to eat dinner. I washed my hands. Do you wash your hands? Then I played games for an hour. Then I got ready for bed. Then my mother read me a Bible story. Then I go to bed.
The End

Many children cannot write like Kathy and Debbie, but most of them can write something,

even if it is no more than copying words in their environment. Some of the children who have never spoken English prior to entering first grade make long lists of words that they see. Mrs. Scott encourages them to read these lists with children who speak English and can read well enough to serve as tutors. This companionship fosters good relations between the children at the same time that it helps the child with English language deficiencies to learn the language.

The publication of a class newspaper illustrates Mrs. Scott's belief that it is important for children to learn that much of the content of writing comes from the things that happen to people every day.

At first Mrs. Scott assumes the responsibility for gathering the items and assembling the newspaper, but she watches carefully to see when a child is ready to be the editor. When this occurs, she assigns space in the classroom for the editor to collect the news and gives him those responsibilities that he can handle.

Frequently she places envelopes on a bulletin board and asks children to contribute to the newspaper by placing items in the various envelopes. The editor may ask certain children to contribute if there is nothing in some of the categories. Each editor can choose the categories he wants for his edition, but some that are common are local news, weather, comics, lost and found, real stories, imaginary stories, and riddles.

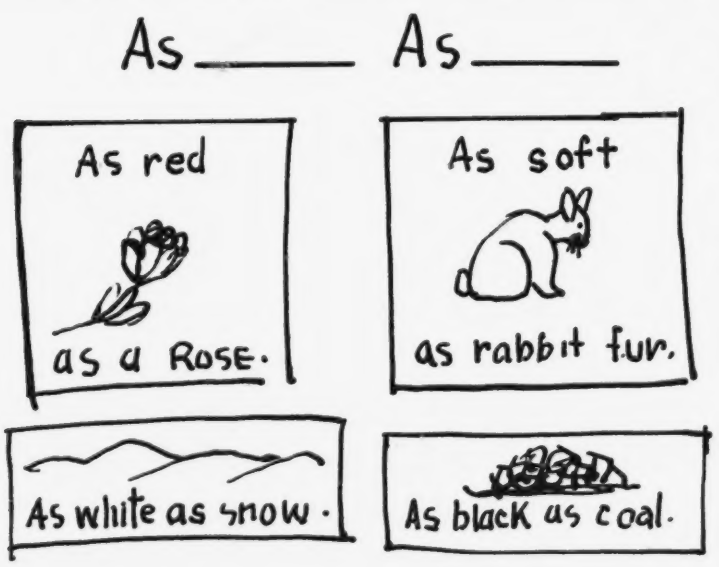
Editors who are capable make their own stencils and get other children to put illustrations on the stencils. Some of the longer stories may be typed by the teacher. Publication of a newspaper encourages children to move from writing of simple stories to writing various types of articles. It also gives the most capable students opportunities to take additional responsibilities.

Mrs. Scott does try to see that there is some item from every child in each issue. Sometimes she has a column of interesting incidents that have been shared in the classroom. In this way she can include children who are not doing their own writing. The newspaper from the first grade in Buena Park School is so popular that extra copies are duplicated for neighbors, relatives, and other classrooms in the school.

With the great range of language development represented in Mrs. Scott's group, there is need for vocabulary growth experiences that are not too discouraging for the less able children, yet challenging for the more capable. In searching for ideas for activities to promote vocabulary growth, Mrs. Scott has found several that meet her criteria.

THE SIMILE

At times during the school year, a bulletin board is reserved for children to contribute similes, usually with illustrations, that they have heard, used, or read.



RHYMES

Usually a class book is in progress in which the children are to record rhymes. Sometimes Mrs. Scott makes a blank book with an attractive cover. She might call it *Make a Rhyme*. Children make sense and nonsense rhymes.

"A fish in a dish."
"A cat with a bat."
"The bunny is funny."

"A frog on a log."
"A bear in a chair."
"A bee in a tree."

Some children never get past this stage of rhyming, whereas others begin to write couplets and simple poems.

"WHAT DID YOU SEE?"

Almost daily Mrs. Scott has a picture or a filmstrip without words that she uses as a means of helping children improve their ability to describe their environment and their feelings. She chooses material that lends itself to the widest interpretation so that she will get a variety of responses. She uses this material with small groups or with the total class. She feels that it is good for the immature children to hear what the more mature ones say about what they see.

After a filmstrip has been shown to the class, it is added to the collection for individual viewing. As children look at the filmstrip from time to time, they recall what many children have said about the different frames.

The class takes short walks in the school neighborhood to observe interesting things around them. Mrs. Scott makes certain that objects are identified, believing that children will learn to see more of their environment if they have names for what they see.

"What Did You Hear?"

One very quiet activity that changes the tempo of things is used frequently. Mrs. Scott asks the children to get quiet enough to hear what is happening out-of-doors. Then they tiptoe one at a time to whisper to Mrs. Scott what they have heard. She keeps a record of what they tell her and reads the list to the class. Sometimes the children will challenge a response, so they learn to report only what they have heard.

Mrs. Scott also has a listening table with earphones for eight children at a time. In that center she keeps recordings that give the children a variety of listening experiences. When she adds something new, she may ask the first group of listeners to tell the class what they heard. Her collection includes music, songs, poetry, stories, songs in Spanish and French, records of different musical instruments, and a host of other materials that build listening skills.

"I Am Thinking"

Children need to understand the use of modification in our language if they are to become efficient and effective in oral and written communication. Mrs. Scott uses games to encourage many informal, oral experiences; for example, she may say, "I am thinking of a river."

The children respond with from one to three adjectives to modify the noun:

river
wide river
wide, winding river
wide, winding, dirty river

Then a child can add a prepositional phrase, which Mrs. Scott introduces by using an appropriate preposition.

"I am thinking of a wide, winding, dirty river with . . ."

The child might respond, ". . . with a boat."

Then the children modify again.

boat
sail boat
little sail boat
very little sail boat

Then Mrs. Scott might finish the sentence, ". . . tossing on the waves."

She doesn't want to draw out the activity with any one word, which would make the responses too difficult for the children. She wants each child to participate at his own level of vocabulary development.

Mrs. Scott extends the listening and telling experiences through dramatization of stories. She likes to use many of the favorite stories of children. She will read a story such as *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. Later she will tell it. Then

she may help a group of children to dramatize it. To do this the children must visualize the characters, the setting, the characteristics of the actors, and the conversation and action of the story.

In the dramatization the teacher serves as the narrator at first, but later the children take turns in this role. No child is too immature to participate in dramatization. The timid, shy child who serves as scenery or as an animal with no speaking part in early productions is sure to grow into speaking parts as he experiences the success of dramatic production.

When children dramatize a story they are—

- Adhering to the sequence of events
- Using supporting details
- Learning to use language meaningfully
- Developing confidence and skills in expressing ideas
- Learning that many of the meanings we get from a story are not in the words themselves, but in the voice, movement, and facial expressions that only the actor or reader can reveal
- Becoming more capable in participating in group situations and in careful listening.

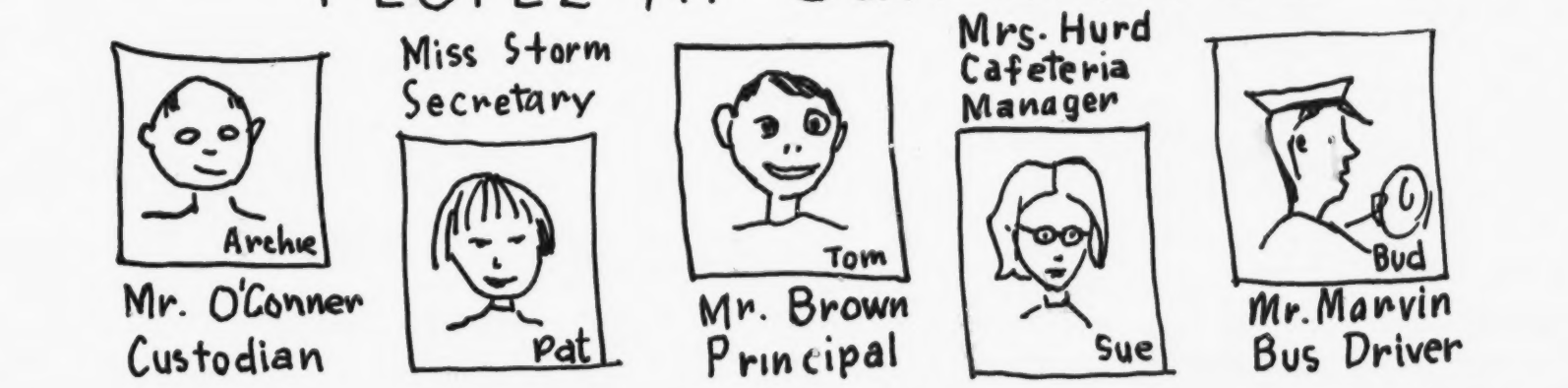
Sometimes Mrs. Scott has the children use simple puppets in dramatizing stories. She finds that the experience of manipulating a puppet often helps the shy child to become less self-conscious in audience situations. The more confident child usually makes an excellent narrator or stage manager.

Mrs. Scott likes to have attractive and useful bulletin boards in her classroom which reflect the ideas, concerns, and productive efforts of the children. In assuming responsibility for bulletin boards, the children have to deal with communication problems beyond the common ones of speaking and writing. They have an opportunity to practice skills in—

- Choosing a main idea
- Using a few words to convey a great deal of meaning
- Using color and design to carry part of the message
- Emphasizing ideas with form, size, and color.

One technique that Mrs. Scott has found to be effective is to place a caption on a bulletin board and ask children to fill it in with paintings and cut-outs, with subcaptions. Such captions as the following may be used:

- *Where Do You Live?* (Children draw their homes and write addresses)
- *Who Are You?* (Children draw self-portraits and write names)



- *Birds in Our Community* (Children paint or cut out birds and write names)
- *People at Our School* (Children draw portraits of school personnel and write names and positions)

For additional suggestions for using bulletin boards with children's work, Mrs. Scott uses the section on "Making Bulletin Boards" in *Independent Activities for Creative Learning* by Darrow and Allen.*

*New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1961. pp. 72-77.

Learning Situations Are Kept Fresh . . . Alive . . . Meaningful . . .

by publishing books for the classroom library

by representing facts of social studies and science with murals

by having a place to think and write.

Meaningful Learning Situations

Martha Miller, a teacher in Washington School, strives in all activities to see through the extraneous factors of school routines and subjects in order to grasp the things that are meaningful and useful to each individual. To do this, she needs to use all the senses with which the children are endowed. Her classroom is crowded with many opportunities for creative self-expression. In reading, the children do more than just read aloud to each other and then discuss the content of the stories and identify some of their own reading problems. They try to develop ways of overcoming problems as they are identified, and they relate the ideas of authors to their personal experiences—real and imaginary. To be able to read is not enough. To use reading in meaningful ways is an equally important goal.

Of course there are hundreds of ways in which Miss Miller tries to keep learning situations fresh, alive, and meaningful. This helps every child maintain a strong, positive attitude toward reading and other communication skills while he is encountering increasingly difficult problems that must be solved before he becomes able to read independently. Some of Miss Miller's methods that are enjoyable and seem to be worthwhile are projects in self-expression through writing, publication of the children's own reading and arithmetic books, publication of a class magazine, painting and writing at the easels, using the tape recorder, and sharing writing and art through use of the opaque projector and overhead projector.

Children in Miss Miller's classroom are encouraged to write their thoughts. They are helped to feel that the only limitation on writing is their speaking vocabulary and their thinking ability.

- If they can think about something, they can talk about it.
- If they can talk about it, they can say the same thing in writing.
- What they write makes reading material for themselves and others.

In this way, the children learn to visualize and extend reading vocabularies beyond the level of controlled vocabulary presented in most basic reading materials. Their own stories are true and make-believe, fact and fantasy, poetry and prose. The offerings of the children are collected and made into books for the library table. Children take great pride in making attractive illustrations and bindings. These books are checked out to take home just like other library books.

Everyone reads these books. Even though children may not be able to read all the words when they meet them in other situations, the real experiences that inspired the creation of the stories inspire the author and other children to read them. The real gain in language development—oral, written, and recall of written language—is in the use and refinement of children's own language. This approach is in contrast to procedures that emphasize the reworking of someone else's language. When children visualize their own speech, they are adding one more clue to word recognition in reading as well as getting experience in spelling and handwriting.

About once each month the children in Miss Miller's classroom publish a magazine. It represents the kind of writing children can do on their own. The magazine is managed by a staff of editors and reporters elected each month. They collect the copy for their assigned section of the magazine, edit it, and work with the editor-in-chief to get the section ready for the typist. Each staff member solicits writing in such areas as news, interviews with local personalities, true stories, make-believe stories, poems, riddles, jokes, arithmetic games, science experiments, comics, cartoons, art from the easel, special interests, and special projects.

There is no specific time set aside for the production of magazine material. The editors tell the class something of what they have in mind and invite contributions by anyone who is interested. If a staff member does not get volunteers for his section, he will solicit articles or write them himself. All contributions are used after careful editing. Editors deal with the mechanics of language. They do not change the ideas or the special way that a child might have of saying something. An example is a report of an interview with the school secretary.

Interview with Joyce

Joyce was born in Lakeview. Her favorite hobby is sewing. Her favorite sport is baseball. Before she came to our school she was a mother. Now she is our school secretary. She is pretty. She has two children. Joyce lives at 2815 Washington Street in Lakeview.

Another favorite way for the children to visualize what they are thinking is painting at the easels. There they have a freedom to use large brush strokes and bright colors, their ideas changing and growing as they are engaged in the act of painting.

Some children write their interpretation on strips of paper pasted on the bottom of the painting. These paintings and stories mounted on a chart rack make reading material for other children. Children who write in relation to their paintings tend to paint with more purpose than the rest and to produce things that have meaning to others. To know that their writing will be put in a prominent place for others to read inspires most of the children to do their best.

One of the bulletin boards in Miss Miller's classroom is used for the development of a mural each week, the children selecting a theme from science, social studies, or literature and working cooperatively to produce it. The discussion involved in the planning gives children an opportunity to suggest ways of representing facts that they have acquired. They are challenged to do more than engage in simple recall.

In one corner of the room children may record stories that they have written. When a child is ready to record, he hangs out a sign that announces, "Quiet Please, Recording." When the sign is out, everyone is exceptionally quiet.

At the end of the day recordings are played back. The children listen to the stories very intently and comment on such things as good sentences, story content, oral expression, choice of words, and new words that have never been used in a story in the room before.

The praise and constructive criticism by class members enriches all the activities in the classroom. Children see new dimensions to the effective use of their own ideas. They develop an appreciation for the clever and unique ways in which their classmates express themselves. One story that had a visible impact on the class was recorded by Danny. In his own calm, confident voice he read:

My Disappointment

I haven't had many disappointments because I try not to ask for things I know I can't have. When Mom and Dad explain why I can't have a thing I am not really disappointed. I can think of only one big disappointment.

I thought my broken arm would be well when the doctor took the cast off. I was glad when the nurse was ready to saw off the cast. No one told me that my arm would still be stiff and look and feel funny; so I was disappointed to see it that way.

It took a lot of exercise to get the strength back into my arm. My arm hurts even now and I remember my disappointment at the doctor's office.

Children also enjoy sharing their ideas in a series of pictures. The pictures are mounted on cardboard for showing on the opaque projector. Some children write a script and read it as the pictures are being projected on the screen. Others tell the story without any script. Sometimes two children work together and read the parts of two characters. Sometimes several children tell stories using the same set of pictures. They try to see how different they can make a story with the same illustrations.

The thrill of seeing the pictures enlarged on the screen seems to be an incentive to enlarge on the story itself. Children who are reluctant to write a story of any length find that they can tell stories that interest the class. As a follow-up, Miss Miller helps the child to see that *if he can tell a story, he can write it* (or some one can write it for him). There are enough varied activities that are current in the classroom so that she can have time to help the *individual* with his own problems of getting ideas on paper. She does not treat highly personal learning situations with mass production methods and materials.

Miss Miller does not use valuable time each day listening to children read orally something that most of them could read well before they came to her classroom. She does not believe the interests and abilities of a group of children can be extended simply by reading and discussing a selection from a book, checking by the use of practice exercises, and testing with similar practice materials.

She defines her task as one of helping children to be free, intelligent, and alert in a democratic society with reading contributing to the improvement of their quality of living. She tries to remove from the classroom environment those practices and learning situations which might obscure the way to a fresh, free, true reflection of the world as each child sees it.

COUNTING
BOOK

Self-Understanding Is Matured . . .

by assuming responsibility for actions

by participating in work activities with others

by keeping mind and body healthy.

Self-Understanding

When Ralph Chance was asked to teach a group of children 10 to 14 years old who had been unsuccessful, he was assured freedom to work with the group. He could not bring himself to believe that all these children were unable to learn to read. He believed that if he would value each child as a human being and provide valid purposes for reading that made sense to the pupils and in which they had had a choice, each child would respond with reading skills commensurate with his abilities. Since he believed reading skills emerge as a result of a fully developed communication program, Mr. Chance decided reading would not be taught as a separate skill at a special time of day. He felt that better attitudes could be developed through activities requiring self-expression rather than remembering answers to questions that the pupils did not ask and that had no meaning to them. His teaching rationale had three major emphases:

- Highlight the child's own language, faulty as it may be.
- Help each child to understand something about the English language.
- Bring each child in contact with the ideas and the language of authors, to agree and disagree, like or not like, extend with personal experiences, modify to meet specific situations, and interact in the multitude of other ways through which good authors have helped people to live a more abundant and interesting life.

The ideas used by Ralph Chance to implement his goals illustrate how a teacher strives for attitude growth *first* and skill development *second*.

Mr. Chance developed a system of reading buddies in his class. He felt that his defeated readers needed to develop confidence by reading many, many books at a level at which they could achieve. Knowing they would never read the easiest books in the library, he asked the first-grade teacher to assign one of her pupils as a reading buddy to each of his children in the ungraded classroom. The purpose was for each of the first-graders to become an audience for oral

reading by the older students. The plan was a tremendous success.

Mr. Chance had an individualized instructional program in all curriculum areas; when a first-grader came to visit his buddy with a book to read, it did not disrupt the program. The relationship grew; the two classes took field trips together so that each first-grader would have an individual guide. This plan gave real incentive to the older children to read in order to prepare for the trips. As the young children got to the point at which they were interested in dictating long stories, the older children took dictation and read the stories back to the young children. Some of them illustrated and bound the books for the school library. They were having *real* experiences with language at a level they could handle successfully. Mr. Chance was available to help when needed, but he was thrilled to see the level of responsibility his students would assume when they wanted to do a good job and were involved in a personal relationship with another human that was satisfying to them.

The taking of dictation and reading was such a success that Mr. Chance decided to use this interest to extend the skill program. He had noted that many of the errors in recognition and in spelling occurred with high frequency words. In place of providing futile drills, he engaged members of the class in authoring books for young children to read. He introduced the idea that simple sentences are usually based on a formula of high frequency words and names of things or of people. He gave each class member a personal copy of a list of words of high frequency and helped them to see that if they would list some names of people and some names of things, they could make many sentences using only the words on the short list of about 250 words.

In order to keep the full language of the students in the classroom activities, he would encourage each one who was going to write a book to tell his story with his full language. Sometimes the stories were taped, and sometimes they were written. But he wanted each author to understand that he possessed more language power than was necessary to write a simple story.

There were some busy days as the classroom was transformed into a publishing house, with authors, illustrators, editors, printers, binders, and general managers. Days flew by as the class brought in dozens of books for ideas. They read and reread the books, not in order to learn how, but to learn enough about our English language system to write simple stories.

As the books were finished, bound copies were taken to classrooms of young children. The author was invited to read the book first and

then leave a copy for the classroom library. The response of children was terrific. Almost suddenly the "dumb kids" were being recognized as worthy, contributing members of the school community. The reading achievement of the children at this point was not the real concern of Mr. Chance. He was much more interested in the obvious gains in being able to—and wanting to—read. He knew that the group in his classroom could learn many things and read with interest and effectiveness if he continued to work with them on a basis that made sense to them.

To extend the information and ideas of the students in ways other than listening and talking, Mr. Chance began to show films with the sound track turned off. After one viewing, he would engage the class in discussing what they saw in the film and guessing what the author was trying to say with the pictures. Then they would view the picture and listen for points of agreement and disagreement with what they had decided. The follow-up discussions were full of meaning and characterized by high interest. The students were not placed in the untenable position of always trying to remember what someone else said; they were interacting with ideas—theirs and someone else's. Their points of view, imaginings, information, and prejudices were valued as beginning points for learning.

Some films had no text—just a music background. These were used for vocabulary development. As the viewing was taking place, children were formulating words to describe what they had seen. The same emphasis was used with filmstrips of cloud formations, textures of wood, flowers, water, ships, automobiles, airplanes, rockets, and other items of interest. Mr. Chance was not seeking *the right answer,* but was trying to elicit as many different answers and responses as possible. He wanted the students to learn from experience that in a free, intelligent society we have need for many different answers to the same questions and problems and the ability to assume personal responsibility for what is said. Each child was experiencing the satisfaction of being a human being.

Mr. Chance experimented with a program of student government in his class. All of the children had been accustomed to a school situation in which someone else had made the major decisions about proper behavior and right ways of doing things and were often reprimanded for disobeying the rules. Mr. Chance had a strong impression that his students did not understand the "why" of most rules; scolding had been tried and found wanting. He decided on a program of action—and his experiment in student government was begun.

First the class engaged in discussions of different ways people govern themselves. Mr. Chance read to them and brought books and articles to the classroom for students to read. They viewed films on government operations and began to make some decisions about how a classroom might be governed. As the plans were formulated, Mr. Chance had serious doubts about the effectiveness of the operation, but he let the students carry through. He was pleased to see them busy with reading and writing, no one excusing himself because of inability to read.

As the children began to realize that their ideas of self-government weren't working, they wanted someone to tell them that they had failed. In place of providing this satisfaction, the teacher helped them to analyze their problems and recommended helpful materials. He brought some simple interpretations of the United States Constitution and read with them so that he could lead in a discussion of the differences between their government and a constitutional form of government. The result was an effort to draft a constitution for the class. This was not viewed as a lesson, and previous success in class enterprises led the class to believe that they could succeed again. Reading, writing, and spelling experiences were abundant—and so were heated discussions. Mr. Chance was viewing a group of children working out their own problems—using communication skills in a functional situation without fears of defeat.

An activity in critical reading was inspired by a collection of newspaper articles with headlines that might be interpreted in many ways. On a bulletin board with the caption *Headline Stories,* Mr. Chance would tack the articles with the text folded up under the headline. Any student could write a story with that headline. At intervals after several students had written articles, the stories would be unfolded. Those who had written to the headlines would have first chance at reading the newspaper stories. Sometimes the stories would be read aloud to the class along with some of the student stories. At these times, Mr. Chance could lead the group in discussing the fact that the same words don't mean the same to everyone who reads them. What has happened to us before we read has something to do with what we understand as we read. The clippings along with the other stories were made into a book for all to enjoy.

Among the many ideas for understanding the nature of language that were used in the class, a study of figurative language and idiom were of greatest interest to students.

Ordinary objects were brought into the classroom to be viewed with an element of distortion.

Looking through a goblet that was thin at the top and thick at the bottom, the students observed the carrot, potato, flower, or other small item and told what they thought the object looked like. Mr. Chance kept a record and then shared it with the total class, helping them to see that we can describe things effectively by saying that they are "like" something else that we know about. When he read stories and books, the class members would frequently point to the use of figures of speech in effective writing.

It came as something of a surprise that all of the students used idioms in their spoken language. They had not been aware that in English we say many things that cannot be literally interpreted. The class made a book of idioms they knew, with illustrations, such as:

"He's getting in my hair."
"His goose is cooked."
"Go fly a kite."
"He burns me up."

Another interesting word study was thinking of multiple meanings for words. The class made a book of *Words with More Than One Meaning*, each child illustrating a page and writing an appropriate sentence such as the following:

"A fish has scales but can't sing a note."
"A potato has eyes but cannot see."
"A river has banks, but yet no money."

The activities associated with writing books for young children gave most of the students confidence in writing, but descriptive language was lacking. Much of what was written was sterile and flat. Hearing good language from our best authors failed to bring the desired improvement. Mr. Chance helped the class to understand how one can modify the noun or pronoun with other words that alter the meaning and clarify the idea. Each pupil then reworked a sentence or a paragraph of his own writing, adding appropriate adjectives.

After they could see the effectiveness of adding adjectives, the class used the same method in modifying the verb. Each pupil then went through a story he had written, adding an adjective and an adverb to each sentence. This activity resulted in added interest in good writing and helped the students to hear good descriptive passages as Mr. Chance read to them and to be aware of good writing by authors they were reading. They developed a real appreciation for the best authors. Reading, to them, had become a process of interacting with the language of authors and using reading to extend meanings and for ideas that would help them to express their own thoughts in better language and with more clarity. This was the goal of their teacher.

A Look Ahead

The focus of this bulletin on the importance of building positive attitudes and habits in successful reading experiences is one indicator that the reading teacher of the future will do less direct teaching of what we have called "reading skills." Infinitely more will be done to help each child find ways in which he can make progress in relating the ideas and language of authors to his personal experiences, his educational needs, his desires and ideals, and his pleasure. Indicators of progress in the direction of diversification of instruction so that the attitudes and habits of each child will be central to the teaching act are easily discernible.

1. The oral language of each child is used throughout the elementary grades as a basic ingredient in word recognition and vocabulary development. This might be termed a linguistic emphasis.
2. Uniform materials for beginning readers will be considered unnecessary and undesirable. Vocabulary controls are in the language itself.
3. There will be no need, nor any desire, to separate children into ability groups within the classroom for direct instruction in reading skills. Already we know enough about human development to insist that children not be grouped in ways that designate levels of respect-

ability. Many forms of short-term, flexible grouping that focus on the personal nature of reading skill development and the necessity of maintaining a strong, positive attitude toward reading will be practiced.

4. The direct teaching of word recognition skills, including phonics and phonetic analysis, will be closely related to the writing and spelling activities in which children deal with the language letter-by-letter, syllable-by-syllable, and word-by-word. During the reading of stories and books, children will focus on the ideas and/or the language used by the author. Good stories by reputable authors will not be used to teach children what we are currently calling "how to read."

5. Successful experiences in reading will include use of many stories that have been dictated or written by the learner. In these materials, the concept load will have been reduced to zero because the child doing the reading is the author. This type of material is appropriate for use in developing a sight vocabulary and in studying simple word recognition skills. A measure of success is assured.

6. Children with backgrounds of experience that are extremely divergent from the typical story content of basic readers will not be placed at a disadvantage. From the beginning, teachers will deal with the ideas and language of their pupils as they seek to build a bridge toward standard English.

7. Children will know more about the nature of the language we call English—how our alphabetic system works to provide appropriate symbols for any word we might say, how ideas are expressed in many kinds of sentences, and how stories are built. Children will come in contact with all the common English sentence patterns because they use them in their oral communication. They will be helped to see that all authors use some of the same kinds of sentences that they themselves use when they talk and write.

8. Materials for reading and reading instruction in the future will be characterized by variety—trade books, the basal reading series, supplementary readers, anthologies, books in content fields, current publications such as newspapers and magazines, and encyclopedias. Teachers will consider it just as important to teach children how to choose reading material for many purposes as it is to learn how to read. A diet of readers of trivial content and literary poverty will be replaced by an enriched diet of multiple reading materials from thousands of authors.

9. Multisensory materials—listening, viewing, and recording devices and projection equipment—will be standard in classrooms. Children will choose a filmstrip or a tape as readily as they now choose a book. Reading will be viewed as

a process of making discriminative reactions, with the reading of print as only one facet.

10. Self-expression in many media will be considered basic to building confidence in communication and interest in the ideas of other people. Teachers will feel that the best way to help many children improve in word recognition is to help them to write their own ideas in effective ways. They will view dramatization, rhythmic activities, singing, discussions, and all kinds of art activities as forms of communication that are related directly to the reading process.

11. Oral reading will be genuine. One child will read orally because other children do not have access to the book he wishes to share with them. The wasteland of oral reading in which every child has a copy of the same book will be diminished.

12. Evaluation of reading programs and reading progress of individuals will include inventories of attitude as well as measures of achievement. Less and less value will be placed on scores derived from group achievement tests as the measures of individual competence and performance. Teachers who reject a child at any level of the school just because that child cannot read a book they consider appropriate will be considered incompetent. High standards among pupils will be achieved in terms of the ability of the teacher to find a variety of ways to teach reading so that each child can respond successfully at his own level.

13. The act of teaching reading will be considered by more and more teachers to be the art of raising the levels of sensitivity of each child—

- To his environment, including his language environment.
- To relationships between oral language and printed symbols and reconstruction of the printed symbols through reading.
- To the variability of oral-written relationships in English spelling.
- To writing as a means of making reading materials and preserving ideas.
- To books as sources of information and recreation.
- To the personal usefulness of writing and reading in communication and successful living.

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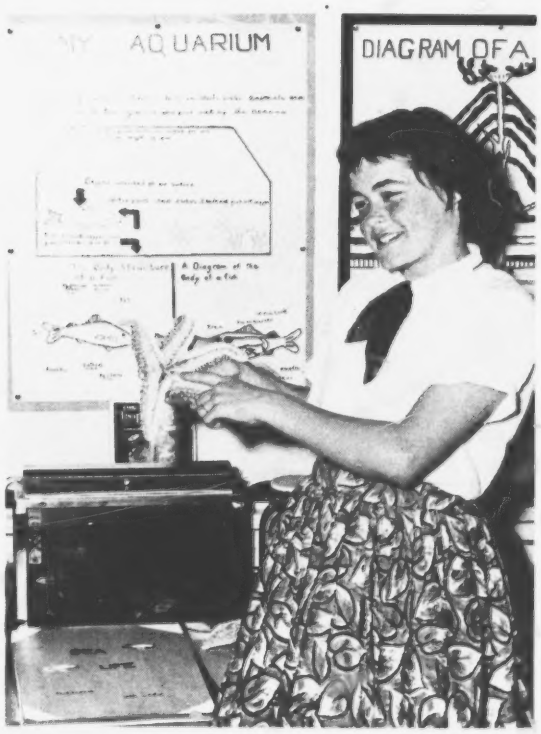
The child can then communicate his thoughts through –

reporting
making models
singing songs
construction



Development in these ways enables the child to express himself with –

increased clarity
interest and enthusiasm
a sensitivity that is personal and unique to the individual